



HOW TO ACHIEVE “THE POLITICAL WILL” TO CHANGE PAKISTAN?

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National Defence University, Islamabad conducts a unique annual programme called as the National Security Workshop and this year it's 24th edition was conducted from 10 October – 11 November 2022. More than seventy participants, both male and female, representing all walks of life, including parliamentarians, professionals from civilian sector, academia, lawyers, bureaucrats and a few senior military officers took part in this five-week long workshop. **National Security Policy of Pakistan 2022-2026 served as the primary framework**

around which all discussions took place, especially focusing on the non-traditional aspects of National Security of Pakistan.

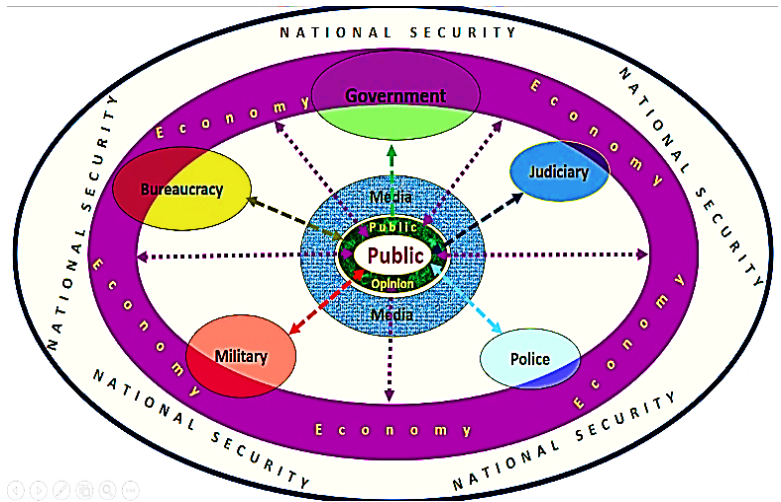
One of the highlights of this year's workshop was the complete consensus among all the participants, without exception, expressing their earnest desire and hope to put things right in Pakistan. There was a general feeling among all the participants that **'everyone knows the problem; people generally know the solutions too, but the real conundrum was as to who would fix the problem.'** Interestingly, parliamentarians were asking this question from the military, military was asking this question from the parliamentarians and civil society representatives were asking this question from both of them. Everyone wondered if the people who had the power and responsibility to change things were also the beneficiary of the prevailing system, then was it realistic to expect change coming from them?

However, at the end of the day, everyone knew, at least in their hearts, that ultimately solution to the problems resided with the political leadership of the country. It was generally due to the **vacuum provided by political leadership** that other forces always moved in to occupy the vacant space. But the opposing argument was equally compelling, which implied that **political leadership has always been constrained** to perform their constitutional role by other forces and hence, the vacuum.

Nevertheless, it was generally understood that in any civilized, modern and democratic country, **the buck would ultimately stop with the political forces who have to develop their capacity to assume this leadership role assigned to them by the Constitution of Pakistan.** For this purpose, it is essential that politico-social and economic stakes of country's political leadership should reside inside the country and not abroad.

Followings are some of the major conclusions from the discussions carried out during the 24th National Security Workshop, which gained almost general consensus among the participants:

- Allah Almighty has bestowed Pakistan with all kinds of natural resources, but, as a nation, we have not been able to manage our resources well. So, the real question is not so much about the shortage of resources, but in fact, it is the **mismanagement of resources.**



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- In order to manage and utilize our resources well, it is essential that we build our institutions so that **'systems become stronger than personalities'** and not vice versa. For this purpose, **'de-politicization of the state institutions'** is the first and foremost step. The priority institutions include Judiciary, Police, Bureaucracy, Military, Election Commission, Public Enterprises, etc. Achievement of **Transparency and Accountability** within state institutions is the key to which **Digitization and Automation** is the future.
- There is a need to **strengthen the social contract** between the state and the people. In this regards, **rule of law** (provision of quick and equitable justice at the doorstep-security of life and property) and **economic well-being of common citizens** are the key requirements that need to be addressed at priority before anything else, even before health, education, etc. It implies that **capacity building of the Judiciary** (quality and quantity) is of utmost importance.
- In order to accomplish all of the above, there is a need for an **'iron political will'**. Whenever in the past, this political will has been on display, Pakistan managed to accomplish many achievements despite heavy odds.

So how would this 'iron political will' come about?

This political will may come about in a political environment where political forces clearly understand that their political survival depends upon their performance (service to the people) and not on artificial support mechanisms, e.g., support of military establishment or vested interests of foreign powers, etc. The political forces should always be looking towards indigenous public support (power of vote) for their survival and not anywhere else.

So how to achieve such a conducive political environment? In this regards, following **policy guidelines** are considered essential; although each of them, as mentioned below, requires an independent and separate implementation strategy:

- Given the past record, **it is the responsibility of armed forces, para-military forces along with intelligence agencies of Pakistan (military establishment) to help achieve/ provide such a conducive political environment in the country through a policy of strict non-interference in political matters.** Moreover, military establishment should also hand over routine law and order tasks to

civilian governments sooner than later, e.g., Rangers employment in Punjab and Sindh, security of foreign teams, delegations, joint check posts, etc. However, military establishment would continue to perform its constitutional role of contributing towards and safeguarding traditional and non-traditional security interests of the country.

- **A strong, bi-partisan and de-politicized Election Commission of Pakistan is the need of the hour.** The election commission would have to exert itself to ensure strict implementation of agreed upon code of conduct and relevant scrutiny procedures for the candidates as well as conduct of free and fair elections.
- In order to safeguard the national security, it is the **prime responsibility of state to 'formulate the nation's public opinion,'** and not leave it for others to exploit. It should be remembered that media is merely a business proposition and a self-proclaimed 'pillar of state,' which is nothing but a misnomer. Therefore, the state must regulate media (chief influencer of public opinion) in a manner it regulates any business in the country. Following measures may be necessary to regulate the media in Pakistan:
 - There is a dire need to **curtail the number of TV News Channels in Pakistan** (like any other modern democracy, e.g., USA, UK, France, Germany, Turkey, etc.) and bring this number down to five-six, whereas the rest could be city-level news channels. The current TV News scene in Pakistan creates more **confusion, ambiguity, despondency and polarization in society** which needs to be strictly curbed.
 - **All national-level TV channels should operate from Pakistani soil,** and their funding sources need to be strictly scrutinized in accordance with laws of land.
 - **In case of social media, tendency to malign, defame, fake news, etc., must be strictly dealt with** in accordance with relevant laws while promoting 'freedom of expression' with responsibility.

The foundation of the National Security of Pakistan, like any other country, should stand on **multiple Centre of Gravity**, including the Government of the day, Judiciary, Law Enforcement and Intelligence Agencies, Bureaucracy and Military, which are collectively responsible to provide

a safe and secure environment for the people of Pakistan to achieve socio-economic prosperity and well-being for themselves and their families.

National Security Division (NSD) headed by the National Security Advisor (NSA), which should be a permanent position in the government, is well placed within the Prime Minister's Secretariat to coordinate and

monitor the progress of above-mentioned broad contours of the implementation strategy **and act as a watchdog**. It should also regularly update the National Security Committee (NSC). For this purpose, there is a need for **capacity building of the NSD so that it could play a more effective and constructive advisory role** in the national policy-making process.